

## Cyberbullying Unplugged

Cyberbullying is the use of Internet technologies to tease, humiliate, and harass someone. It might be mean text messages sent at all hours of the day, or degrading comments about someone posted to a website. Cyberbullying can have devastating effects on children, so learn about the issue and how to help your child deal with it.

### Spot It *A child who is being cyberbullied may*



- ▶ Avoid using computers, cell phones, and other technological devices
- ▶ Appear stressed when receiving an e-mail, instant message, or text
- ▶ Withdraw from family and friends
- ▶ Act reluctant to attend school and social events
- ▶ Avoid conversations about computer use
- ▶ Exhibit signs of low self-esteem including depression and/or fear
- ▶ Have declining grades
- ▶ Stop eating or sleeping
- ▶ In serious cases, consider suicide

### Deal With It *If your child is being cyberbullied, teach them to*



- ▶ Not respond
- ▶ Save the evidence
- ▶ Report it to the website, and/or your Internet service provider

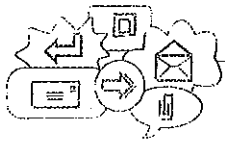
#### *Also, you should*

- ▶ Meet with school administrators to discuss a plan of action and their bullying/cyberbullying policy
- ▶ Talk about the situation with the bully's parent or guardian

### Talk About It *Ask your child*



- ▶ Has anyone ever been mean to you online? How did you respond?
- ▶ Have you ever been mean to anyone online? Why?
- ▶ Is it OK to forward a text message making fun of someone? Why or why not?
- ▶ Do you know your school's policy on bullying?
- ▶ Which teacher would you talk to if you were being bullied?



**Did You Know?**  
Cyberbullying involves more than just the bully and victim; bystanders also have a role to play.

### Standing By: Mike's Story

**Text and video messages go around Mike's high school all the time.** He's just received one showing a classmate being tripped in the cafeteria. "Forward me" the message says, but Mike thinks that forwarding it would be mean. The student featured in the video message is already being teased and taunted in the hallways. Every time a new person gets the video, there is someone else laughing at him. Mike doesn't know what to do. If he tells a teacher about the video, maybe someone will stop the teasing. On the other hand, he doesn't want to become the cyberbullies' next target.

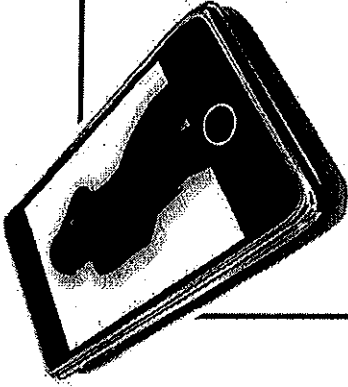
Encourage your children to speak up and tell a trusted adult if they know that a peer is being cyberbullied. If children show that they are unwilling to support cyberbullying or let it go on under the radar, then bullies are more likely to back off.

**Q: How do I know if my child is sexting?**

**A:** No parent or guardian wants to be the last one to know that their child is sexting. Try to maintain open lines of communication with your children so that they are not afraid to talk to you if they receive inappropriate photos or are being pressured to send them.

**Here are some discussion starters to help you have the "sexting talk" with your child:**

- Have you ever received a naked picture on your cell phone?
- Has anyone ever asked or pressured you to send a nude or sexual picture?
- Do you think it's OK to send "sexy" messages or images? Why?
- What could happen to you if you send or forward a naked picture with your cell phone?
- How likely is it that images and messages intended for one person will be seen by others?



**Tips to Prevent  
SEXTING  
for Teens**



**THINK ABOUT THE CONSEQUENCES**

of taking, sending, or forwarding a sexual picture of someone else, even if it's of you. You could get kicked off of sports teams, face humiliation, lose educational opportunities, and even face a police investigation.

**NEVER TAKE**

images of yourself that you wouldn't want everyone—your classmates, your teachers, your family, or your employer—to see.

**BEFORE HITTING SEND**

remember that you can't control where this image may travel. What you send to a boyfriend or girlfriend could easily end up with their friends, and their friends' friends, and so on...

**IF YOU FORWARD**

a sexual picture of someone without their consent, you are violating their trust and exposing them to potential ridicule. It's not up to you to decide who should see their body, so don't forward the image to anyone.

**IF ANYONE PRESSURES**

you to send a sexual picture, don't give in and talk to an adult you trust. Remember that anyone who tries to get you to do something you are uncomfortable with is probably not trustworthy.

fold here

**For more resources visit [NetSmartz.org](http://NetSmartz.org)**

Many teens believe that anything they want to do with their bodies and their phones is their business. Young people enjoy the privacy and freedom that cell phones give them from their parents or guardians, and sometimes they use that freedom to explore their budding sexuality. Amanda Lenhart of the Pew Internet & American Life Project calls the combination of cell phones and sexual exploration "a 'perfect storm' for sexting."<sup>1</sup> Youths who engage in sexting, the sending or posting of nude or partially nude images, expose themselves to a variety of social, emotional, and even legal risks. The good news is that most teens do not sext—only 4% of cell-owning teens (12-17) say they have sent these kinds of images<sup>2</sup>—but those who do often face unexpected and unwanted consequences.

Help your children avoid these potentially life-changing consequences by learning more about the issue and talking to your children before they put themselves in a compromising position.

### Q: Why do teens sext?

**A:** Teens sext for many reasons. They may be trying to impress a crush or trying to be funny. Some are responding to a sexual text message they've received and others willingly send nude photos of themselves to a boyfriend or girlfriend. Occasionally teens are pressured into sending sexual pictures, and in extreme cases, they may be blackmailed by someone threatening to distribute an earlier sexting image if they do not send more. Teens make these decisions without thinking about how their futures may be affected. It's important for parents and guardians to understand that as technically savvy as their children are, they often don't think about the implications of how quickly and widely digital information can spread via cell phone and the Internet.

### Q: What are the consequences of sexting?

**A:** Sexting may profoundly affect the emotional and psychological development of a child. Trust is broken when an image is forwarded without the creator's consent, such as when a boyfriend takes revenge on an ex-girlfriend by forwarding images intended to be private. Once an image is spread via cell phone or posted online, it is impossible to get back and can potentially circulate to hundreds of people. Teens who engage in sexting risk reoccurring embarrassment, exploitation, and victimization, which could be psychologically devastating.

Teens who sext may also face social repercussions, such as being judged or excluded by their peers, communities, and families. They may become targets of mean comments, rumors, and harassment. Unfortunately, the image may follow them for a long time, damaging academic, social, and employment opportunities. For example, some teens caught sexting have lost their place on school sports teams, potentially impacting their college prospects.

In cases involving blackmail, bullying, or images being passed around without consent, law-enforcement officers may become involved, often at the request of anxious parents or school administrators. Although it is unlikely that teens will be charged with a serious crime for sexting, police investigations can be stressful for everyone, especially if there is media attention. Many teens have been ordered to attend an educational program or complete community service as a result of these investigations.

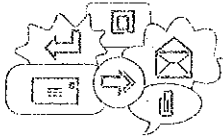
### Q: What can I do to help prevent my child from sexting?

**A:** Make sure to set house rules for Internet and cell phone use with your children and review them often. You should also discuss the consequences for breaking those rules. For example, you might consider disabling picture messaging. If children ignore the rules, consider removing cell phones altogether; however, this should be your last resort. Technology is not going anywhere, and it's important that children learn how to use it appropriately.

Talk to them early and often about how digital information and images may travel very far, very quickly. Make it absolutely clear to your children that the moment they send a digital image of themselves from their cell phone, they lose complete control of what happens to it next.

<sup>1</sup> Lenhart, Amanda. *Teens and Sexting*. Pew Internet & American Life Project, 2009.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*



# A PARENT'S GUIDE TO SOCIAL NETWORKING



**Comments** Info Photos Profile Inbox

**Help! My child is on a social networking site!**  
 While you may be concerned when your children join a social networking site, it doesn't mean they're in danger. Social networking sites are places online where young people go to socialize with their friends, talk to people with similar interests, and share what's going on in their lives. But these sites can also be places where kids post something inappropriate or meet the wrong people.

**How can I keep my child safe?**  
 Check, check, check! The most important thing you can do to protect your child on these sites is to get involved and regularly check his/her profile.

**What do I look for?**  
 Sometimes looking through your child's social networking profile can be overwhelming. Where are the privacy settings? What is a "wall"? Use this practical guide and check off each section when you're done. That way, you won't miss anything.

## 5 Positive Things Your Child Can Do On Social Networking Sites

- 1. Create family photo albums**  
 What better way to keep your distant relatives up-to-date on your family's activities?
- 2. Champion a cause**  
 From animal rights to bullying awareness, social networking sites are the place to go for social activists.
- 3. Join a group**  
 Niche communities have found a home on social networking sites where people can connect and discuss their interests with like-minded people.
- 4. Market a talent**  
 Stars are born every day online. No need to move to Hollywood to pursue that recording contract; with one hit video the producers will come to you!
- 5. Find a college**  
 Social networking makes it easier to chat with college students and faculty, so your child can make an informed decision about where to go to school.

### POPULAR SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES FOR TEENS

Facebook | MySpace | myYearbook | Bebo | Gaia

This resource brought to you by



For more resources visit [NetSmartz.org](http://NetSmartz.org)

Copyright © 2010 National Center for Missing & Exploited Children. All rights reserved.

[NetSmartz.org/TipSheets](http://NetSmartz.org/TipSheets)

# PARENTS' GUIDANCE TO SMARTPHONE SAFETY

## SMART OR SCARY?

Smartphones are essentially little computers, so you might be a little worried when handing one over to your child. Take some time to understand the risks and implement a few safeguards so that you can help your child use smartphones safely.



About 1 in 4 teens report owning a smartphone.

## THE RISKS

### - CYBERBULLYING

With the constant connectivity of smartphones, your child may be more susceptible to cyberbullying or have more opportunities to cyberbully others.

### - GEOLOCATION

A GPS-enabled smartphone can reveal your child's location through online posts and uploaded photos.

### - INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

With smartphones, your child has mobile access to content you may consider inappropriate, such as pornography or violent videos.

### - SEXING

Your child may use the Internet and social apps to send, receive, or forward revealing photos.

### - VIRUSES & MALWARE

Just like a computer, a smartphone is vulnerable to security attacks if your child accesses unsecured websites and apps.

## 5 WAYS TO BE SMARTER THAN THE SMARTPHONE!

- 1. Be a parent and a resource.**  
Establish clear guidelines, including time limits and consequences for inappropriate behavior, but be open so your child will come to you with any problems.
- 2. Set up password protection.**  
This will keep everyone but you and your child from accessing personal information stored on the phone.
- 3. Update the operating system.**  
New versions often contain important security fixes.
- 4. Approve apps before they are downloaded.**  
Make sure you understand their capabilities and approve their content.
- 5. Understand location services.**  
GPS features are useful when using maps, but you'll want to disable location-tagging when your child posts anything online.

For more resources visit [NetSmartz.org/TipSheets](http://NetSmartz.org/TipSheets)

Copyright © 2012 National Center for Missing & Exploited Children. All rights reserved.

**NetSmartz Workshop**

A PROGRAM OF THE  
NATIONAL CENTER FOR MISSING & EXPLOITED CHILDREN

Lehnart, Amanda.  
Teens, Smartphones & Texting.  
Pew Internet & American Life Project.  
March 19, 2012.